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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to clarify the relationship between 2 expressions of alienation, described as psychological alienation and activist political alienation, and to learn something of the characteristics of students who manifest these different expressions. Four general types of students are found in evidence. The first type are the conventionalists or students with low psychological alienation and low activist political alienation. These are generally good students who are satisfied with the societal status quo. The second type of student is the disturbed conventionalist or a student with high psychological alienation and low activist political alienation. These students are generally not able to form their own identities, but do not attribute their personal dissatisfactions to defects in the established political structure. The third type are the integrated activists or students with low psychological alienation and high activist political alienation. These students usually have liberal parents and are from socioeconomically and educationally privileged backgrounds. They remain faithful to parents values, and are frequently more idealistic, individualistic, and impulsive than other students. The final type; the disturbed activists, appear to have both high psychological alienation and high activist political alienation. These students are usually from privileged backgrounds, but are estranged from parents, resentful and rebellious. (HS)

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ON ALIENATION AND ACTIVISM

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Alienation" has been the term used to characterize both social deviants who do not fit with the pace, style, structure, or values of contemporary American society, and conformists who, essentially alienated from themselves, overadapt and move in the world as they think they should, but experience no personal fulfillment. The term alienation has thus been so widely and indiscriminately used, both in popular and professional literature, that it has come to be either empty of meaning or so freighted with meanings that few can agree on a definition.

Because much of the recent literature and commentary on political activism and alienation has focused on the feelings and behaviors of college students, it is within this context that most of the confusion, both terminological and ideological, has arisen. The common labeling of nearly all unconventional youth as "alienated" has contributed to obscuring the distinction between alienation from self and the alienation from social institutions that is presumed to underlie deviance. Further, the characterization of alienation generally found in the theoretical literature, as a passive and retreatist estrangement, seems at odds with the recent descriptions of many disenchanted American youth, most notably the politically radical activists on college campuses, who have been labeled "alienated," and indeed have so described themselves. But their alienation has taken an active, rather than a passive form. While most of the literature on alienation has failed to consider the problem of activist alienation, both Marx (1965) and Merton (1957) have suggested that social rebellion and revolution may represent more active, as opposed to passive, forms of alienation.

The concept of alienation has thus been fraught with ambiguity and contradiction, and the term has rarely been modified to specify the object of the alienation (estrangement from self or society) or the form of estrangement (passive retreatism or active rebellion).

Assuming the legitimacy of conceptualizing different forms and objects of alienation, what can be said of the relationship between activist political alienation (tactical and ideological opposition to current values, policies, and authorities represented by established social institutions) and the more passive self-estrangement known as psychological alienation (feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, and isolation)? Both Marx and Merton saw the possibility that active political alienation (rebellion and revolution) might reduce or help to overcome the negative effects of retreatist self-estrangement. And other observers of the politically active '60s advanced a variety of conflicting hypotheses concerning the relationship between political activism and psychological alienation. These positions, outlined below, are most clearly represented by the Oedipal (or conflict of generations) hypothesis of Feuer (1969) and the socialization hypothesis of Flacks (1967) and Keniston (1968).

For Feuer, political activism and psychological alienation are integrally related—as an outgrowth of unresolved Oedipal conflicts and negative identification with parents. In this sense, political activism is psychologically and unconsciously motivated rebellion, with the political arena merely serving as a projective device for playing out alienation from self and parents.

In contrast to Feuer, Keniston's (1965, 1968) studies of alienated and activist youth led him to suggest that active political alienation is a polar opposite of psychological alienation. In Keniston's view, where political activism denotes commitment, alienation denotes lack of commitment; where activism indicates an optimistic confrontation with social injustice, psychological alienation indicates a pessimistic negativism and nihilistic political apathy. Rather than acting out a repudiation of family values, Keniston saw politically activist youth as having been socialized into their roles as radicals by parents whose own radical and activist values had not been so clearly acted upon. This is in line with Flacks' (1967) findings.

The present study was undertaken to clarify the relationship between these two expressions of alienation—psychological and activist political—and to learn

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something of the characteristics of students who manifest the different forms of alienation. A review of the previous research on the characteristics of activist and alienated youth suggests that the two dimensions of alienation are independent and uncorrelated and could be used to define a fourfold typology of alienation and integration.

The students surveyed for the present study were subjects in two studies–a large longitudinal study of student development, and a study of student-faculty relationships, both conducted at the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, at Berkeley. The sample, drawn from eight colleges representative of the diversity of higher educational institutions in the United States, had completed questionnaires and the Omnibus Personality Inventory (OPI) as freshmen and seniors. From an initial sample of 1,475 students, a subsample was selected for analysis of the hypothesized dimensions of alienations by factor analytic procedures.* Two dimensions were identified and found to be relatively independent of each other (r = .16) and consistent with the theoretical definitions of psychological alienation and activist political alienation.

Having established the relationship between the two dimensions, the remaining sample was divided into four groups based on median splits along each of the alienation dimensions, and 125 students from each group were randomly selected for further analysis.

TYPOLOGY OF "ALIENATED" STUDENTS

The findings of the present research have largely confirmed a fourfold typology of alienation, and these findings will be presented in terms of the distinctions between types of political activism and types of psychological alienation which have not previously been made.

The Conventionalists (Low Psychological Alienation-Low Activist Political Alienation)

While students low in both dimensions of alienation are overtly similar in sociopolitical behavior and attitudes to students identified in other studies as apathetic and conformist, they do not exhibit the retreatism and personal disturbance of apathetic youth. They are satisfied with the societal status quo and have identified with and accepted the values of their parents. They are primarily concerned with "career, success, marriage, family, and financial security [Block, et al., 1968, p. 209]." Protestant ethic values of responsibility, conformity, achievement, and obedience figure prominently in their lives, and for such young people social conformity is not achieved at the expense of psychological integration, and political inactivity is not the result of feelings of powerlessness. They actively adopt the conventional roles they play.

The Disturbed Conventionalists (High Psychological Alienation-Low Activist Political Alienation)

Students who are politically inactive and highly psychologically alienated, however, are those who have not been able to achieve a personally satisfying identity, but do not act out their psychological alienation in the political arena (except, perhaps, in their noninvolvement or apathy). For these psychological retreatists and social ritualists, apparent acceptance of majority political attitudes is the result of feelings of personal inefficacy. Raised in families concerned with conformity, obedience, and docility, their relationships with parents were characterized by anxiety, inhibition, and oppression (Block, et al., 1969). They tend to be from the lower middle class and to exhibit social and racial prejudice. Their political passivity stems in part from the fact that they do not attribute their personal dissatisfactions to defects in the established political structure.

The Integrated Activists (Low Psychological Alienation-High Activist Political Alienation)

These politically active students, while low in psychological alienation, nevertheless may be involved in developing and actualizing their independent identities. They tend to share many of the characteristics of political activists described in recent literature, and are the students who not only have rejected dominant sociopolitical values and taken deviant positions, but also have acted on them in the political arena. Their deep commitment to political activity is accompanied by strong feelings of personal efficacy.

The ideology and activity of these students from socioeconomically and educationally privileged backgrounds are an outgrowth of their moral development and their rearing by politically liberal-radical parents who had a Spockian approach to child rearing. While more activist than their parents, they are nevertheless ideologically faithful to their parents' values.

TYPOLOGY OF ALIENATION

Activist Political Alienation	Psychological Alienation: Low	Psychological Alienation: High
Low	Group I Low Psychological Low Activist Political **Integrated Conventionalists**	Group II High Psychological Low Activist Political **Disturbed Conventionalists**
High	Group III Low Psychological High Activist Political **Integrated Activists**	Group IV High Psychological High Activist Political **Disturbed Activists**

*For a detailed description of the methodology and results of this study, see: Dienst, E. R. Psychological and Activist Political Alienation Related to Faculty-Student Interaction. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Berkeley: University of California, 1971.

Integrated activists tend to be academically superior and of an intellectual disposition. In personality they are oriented to a direct expression of impulses, are nonauthoritarian, and frequently are more "critical, curious, idealistic, individualistic, impulsive, and informed . . ." than other students [Block, Haan, & Smith, 1968, p. 216].

The Disturbed Activists (High Psychological Alienation-High Activist Political Alienation)

Students who are politically active and psychologically alienated have much in common with the uncommitted repudiative youth described by researchers such as Keniston (1965). But unlike the uncommitted, these doubly alienated individuals are political activists. Their activism might have been related to the climate of the '60s, which gave them an outlet for what otherwise might have been more passive disenchantment, but it may also be that it was this activist subgroup that was the subject of Feuer's conceptualization of generational conflict as the source of student activism.

Although many of the disturbed activists come from socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds, the thread of estranged family relationships, a domineering and possessive mother, and a prosperous but ineffectual father often runs through their experience. Rejective of both dominant social values and personal worth, this pessimistic social activism stems, in part, from personal and psychological negativism and rebellion. Since these doubly alienated students are pessimistic about society and themselves, it is likely that their political activity is an acting out of a general personal malaise or an attempt to overcome it.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN TYPES OF ACTIVISTS

The validity of the four prototypes of alienaton described was confirmed by much of the data offered in the present study, and the findings suggest that it is not only possible, but essential, to differentiate between the two types of political activists and the two forms of psychological alienation.

While both groups of politically activist youth were found to be similar in certain characteristics, there were also important differences. Both types of activists had similar intellectual orientations, and were directed toward self-motivated liberal intellectuality, scoring higher on measures of intellectual disposition, thinking introversion, theoretical orientation, estheticism, and thinking complexity. This liberal intellectuality was accompanied by a rejection of conventional achievement-oriented educational concerns, such as practical and vocational status considerations. Both groups were more informed about and more interested in political affairs, and more radical, altruistic, and humanistic in their political and social thinking than their nonactivist peers. They were also accepting of underground or counter subcultures.

Contrary to the notion that student activism is a result of social conformity and contagion, the activism exhibited by seniors was anticipated by their radical political stance as freshmen. Both types of activists more often had

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liberal parents, a finding which suggests generational continuity rather than conflict, as did their more frequent one-to-one interactions with college faculty members.

Despite these similarities, the two types of activists differed from one another in a number of important ways. Those who by definition were more psychologically integrated had more positive relationships with their families and more frequent interactions with faculty than those who were psychologically alienated. They showed a somewhat greater interest in intellectual activities, reading, and thinking, were somewhat less concerned with the practical, and increased more in their liberal intellectuality during college than the disturbed activists.

As might be expected, the two types of activists were most dissimilar in their personality characteristics. Disturbed activists (students high in both dimensions of alienation) showed greater discrepancy between self and ideal self, more social introversion, impulse expression, and anxiety. In addition, they scored more extremely on the Response Bias Scale of the the OPI in a direction which has been correlated with scores on measures of personality disturbance.

The intellectual and personal superiority and strength which have been associated with activism in most of the recent studies of campus radicals is clearly most applicable to those among the political activists who have achieved a well-integrated personal identity, i.e., to those who are relatively free of psychological alienation. These students are more liberal, more intellectual, and more personally well-adjusted than many of their college peers. Given their relatively positive attachment to family and the similarity of their parents' political values to their own, it is unlikely that their activism is primarily a result of generational conflict. It is these students who most often interact with faculty outside the classroom.

The disturbed activists, on the other hand, were not only more psychologically disturbed but also more interpersonally estranged than the integrated activists. Their relationships with family and faculty were more distant and their social orientation was more introverted. The correlational analyses prevent any assignment of causality, but we cannot discount the hypothesis that for these doubly alienated students, activism was bound up with unconscious conflicts and elements of generational resentment or at least ambivalence, toward elders.

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ALIENATION

The two types of psychologically alienated students—the apathetic and the doubly alienated—identified in the present study were markedly different from one another. The conceptualization of the varieties of personal alienation among college youth must clearly be expanded to include not only the repudiative and politically alienated individuals who have been given much attention in recent years, but also more conformist, other-directed individuals whose personal alienation is expressed in ritualistic adherence to social norms rather than in deviant lifestyles. Such covert alienation has been described by Fromm (1941) and studied by sociologists interested in societal anomie (normlessness), but during the recent years of campus unrest, the meaning and significance of such alienation on the college campus has been largely ignored.

The psychologically alienated conformists were not widely different from students in general in religious affiliation and identity, nor in national origin, although they were somewhat lower in socioeconomic status and came from more politically conservative families.

Compared to the disturbed activists, these apathetic and disturbed conformists had less contact and interaction with faculty despite their quite traditional academic orientation and goals. Although the psychologically alienated, politically inactive students were academically traditional, they were not oriented toward an intellectual life. On the other hand, the psychologically alienated activists were committed to a liberal intellectualism and self-motivation (they scored higher on measures of intellectual interest, thinking introversion, theoretical orientation, estheticism, thinking complexity, and intellectual disposition), but rejected traditional requirements and practical achievement concerns. Thus, the disturbed conformists adhered to the requirements of college study, but not to the spirit of intellectual inquiry, while the disturbed activists refused to conform to the letter of academic requirements, but were committed to self-motivated intellectual pursuits.

In sociopolitical orientation, the disturbed conformists were predictably uninterested in political issues and more accepting of government policies. They were also more opposed to student freedom on campus, less altruistic, less autonomous, and more rejective of campus minority organizations. These characteristics—of the politically conservative, psychologically alienated students—define a form of alienation that has been given little attention in studies of alienation among college students.

In recent years, politicians and college administrators have expressed much concern about political activism and deviant lifestyles on campus. College deans and presidents are being trained in conflict resolution and mediation, and executive committees have focused on the problems precipitated by the so-called radical fringe. Little attention has been given to the alienation among college students which involves submissive and passive social conformity.

As the children of the lower middle class begin to attend college, they may bring a new political conformity and apathy. Some of their conformity may not represent an active identification with conservative parental values (as it does for integrated conventionalists), but rather a covert psychological alienation. We may need to ask whether colleges have a responsibility for dealing with nondisruptive forms of alienation as assiduously as they have assumed (or had thrust upon them) the responsibility for dealing with overt political forms of alienation.

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